

Message Text

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ACTION SS-15

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R 091440Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9087

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FOR DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY FOR MANAGEMENT EAGLEBURGER,
ASSISTANT SECRETARY THOMAS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ATRN OVIP

SUBJECT: TRAVEL ON U.S. AIRLINES

REF: (A) A-7187, NOV 28, 1975

(B) STATE 305227

(C) CAIRO 13110

1. I REGRET TO TROUBLE YOU WITH THIS MATTER,
BUT BELIEVE IT IS OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE FOR
BUSY FS OFFICERS TO WARRANT HIGH-LEVEL CORRECTIVE
MEASURES. THE BUREAUS CLEARLY CAN DO NOTHING
ABOUT IT. I REFER TO THE STRICTURES SET FORTH
IN REF A ON THE USE OF U.S. AIRLINES.

2. I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH P.L. 93-623 AND AM QUITE
STATISFIED WITH FLYING, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER
POSSIBLE, ON U.S. AIRLINES. SO FAR AS I AM
CONCERNED, TWA AND PANAM SERVICES HAVE
GENERALLY RUN FROM SATISFACTORY TO GOOD. I AM
CONCERNED, HOWEVER, AT THE EXCESSIVE RIGIDITY OF
INTERPRETATION OF P.L. 93-623 WHICH, IN THE ABSENCE
OF HIGHER LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WITH GAO, THE DEPT
SEEMS TO BE APPLYING.

3. AS A RESULT OF REFTEL B, MY TOTAL TRAVEL TIME
BETWEEN CAIRO AND WASHINGTON ON JAN 4 ENDED UP
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TWENTY SEVEN HOURS. ALTHOUGH TWA DID EVERYTHING

IT COULD IN ROME TO ASSIST THERE WAS AN ALMOST FIVE HOUR DELAY THERE. THE ROME AIRPORT, AS ANYONE WHO HAS HAD THE MISFORTUNE OF HAVING TO TRANSIT IT IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS WILL ATTEST, IS UTTER CHAOS. AS YOU MAY KNOW, ITALIAN GOVT HAS NATIONALIZED AIRPORT AND NEITHER TWA NOR PANAM CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS. TWA PEOPLE TELL ME THEY FREQUENTLY TEAR OUT THEIR HAIR AT WHAT TAKES PLACE THERE. IN MY MOST RECENT CASE, WHAT I PREDICTED WAS LIKELY TO HAPPEN (REFTEL C) DID. IT WAS FURTHER COMPOUNDED BY THE NEED TO TRANSIT NEW YORK ON THE LAST NIGHT OF THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND. HAD I BEEN AUTHORIZED TO TAKE LUFTHANSA FROM CAIRO TO MUNICH AND PANAM ONWARDS, I COULD HAVE REDUCED MY TRAVEL TIME TO EIGHTEEN HOURS, COMING IN DIRECTLY TO DULLES.

4. I CONSIDER THE COMMENT THAT DEPARTMENT CAN NOT AUTHORIZE TRAVEL ON FOREIGN AIRLINES SIMPLY BECAUSE OF QUOTE INCONVENIENCE TO THE TRAVELER UNQUOTE (REFTEL B) TO BE UTTER BUREAUCRATIC NONSENSE. IN ASKING FOR PERMISSION TO FLY THE FASTEST WAY, AVOIDING THE ROME CHAOS, I WAS NOT DOING SO FOR PURPOSES OF PERSONAL CONVENIENCE. I WAS DOING SO BECAUSE THE SECRETARY HAD ASKED ME TO BE AVAILABLE TO MEET WITH HIM ON THE MORNING OF JAN 5 TO DISCUSS BUSINESS. I COULD NOT LEAVE TWO DAYS EARLIER BECAUSE OF PREPARATIONS FOR CODEL MORGAN AND HAD TO MAKE THE WHOLE TRIP IN A SINGLE DAY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, GIVEN THE ACTIVE NATURE OF THE CAIRO OPERATION, THESE ONE DAY LONG HAULS USUALLY HAPPEN. AS A RESULT OF TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS OF TRAVEL, I WAS FRANKLY NOT THE MOST WIDE AWAKE PERSON AT THE SECRETARY'S MEETING.

5. I CITE TO YOU MY RECENT CASE SIMPLY AS AN EXAMPLE. I SUBMIT THAT, IN THE INTEREST OF THE HEALTH, MORALE AND EFFICIENCY OF BUSY FS OFFICERS, WHO ARE CALLED BACK FROM FAR OFF POSTS ON URGENT BUSINESS, THIS KIND OF SITUATION NEEDS TO BE CORRECTED. THERE SHOULD BE SOME LATITUDE IN BEING AUTHORIZED TO

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FLY FOREIGN AIRLINES IF THE OVERALL TIME FACTOR IS LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANT. IT SHOULD BE PERMISSIBLE TO AVOID HAVING TO BE ROUTED THROUGH CHRONIC DELAY CENTERS LIKE ROME, EVEN IF NO STRIKE HAS BEEN CALLED IN ADVANCE FOR THE DAY, SINCE EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT THE TRAVELER IS LIKELY TO BE HELD UP THERE BY ANYWHERE FROM FOUR TO SIX HOURS. THE BUREAUS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO AUTHORIZE SUCH

EXCEPTIONS BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOUR OFFICES SHOULD DISCUSS THE SUBJECT WITH GAO AND GET A LESS RIGID RULING THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT HEALTH, MORALE AND EFFICIENCY CONSIDERATIONS. AIRLINE SCHEDULES THESE DAYS RARELY MEAN ANYTHING ESPECIALLY WHEN ROME HAS TO BE TRANSITED, AND ARE NOT A PROPER BASIS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THIS MATTER.

6. I KNOW THAT CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS, WHO PRESUMABLY ARE ALSO BOUND BY P.L. 93-623, ARE INTERPRETING THAT LAW MORE SENSIBLY THAN WE SEEM TO BE DOING. FOR EXAMPLE, I HAVE STAFFDEL VAN KIRK COMING IN TODAY FROM LONDON VIA BOAC, A SENSIBLE ROUTING. IF HE WERE TO FOLLOW THE RIGID POSITION SET FORTH BY THE DEPARTMENT IN REF A, HE SHOULD FLY PAN AM LONDON TO ROME (WHERE HE WOULD DOUBTLESS WAIT FOUR OR FIVE HOURS) AND TWA ONWARDS TO CAIRO. IF CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS ARE ALLOWED TO DO IT, I THINK THE DEPARTMENT OUGHT TO FIGHT THE CASE FOR ITS OWN OFFICERS AS WELL.

7. I AGAIN STRESS THAT I HAVE NO QUARREL WITH USING U.S. AIRLINES, BUT SOLELY WITH THE CONCEPT -- OR AT LEAST AS IT IS INTERPRETED BY NEA/EX -- THAT THIS MUST BE DONE IRRESPECTIVE OF ROME CHAOS OR OTHER EXPERIENCE RELATED LIKELY EXTENSIVE DELAY SPOTS. NOR AM I MAKING THE CASE OF FS PERSONNEL PROCEEDING TO OR FROM THE STATES ON LEAVE STATUS. I AM TALKING SOLELY ABOUT BUSY OFFICERS WHO MUST RUSH BACK FOR URGENT, OFFICIAL CONSULTATIONS. FOR THEM, THE MATTER OF SAVING HOURS IS NOT SIMPLY QUOTE ONW OF INCONVENIENCE TO THE TRAVELER UNQUOTE (A DISGRACEFUL PHRASE) BUT ONE OF HEALTH AND EFFICIENCY. US FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, TRAVELING ON URGENT UNCLASSIFIED

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BUSINESS, SHOULD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS PRIVATE AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN IN TRAVEL STATUS.

8. I STRONGLY URGE THE MATTER BE DISCUSSED WITH GAO IN REALISTIC TERMS SO THAT WE GET A SENSIBLE INTERPRETATION.
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